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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PNAT](#) [UNSC](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UN DISTRESS OVER STAFF HOUSING AVERTED

REF: A. USUN 104
[1](#)B. USUN 45

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Ashraf Qazi met Ambassador Khalilzad on January 26 and hinted that the UN would re-evaluate its presence in Iraq if security concerns for housing of its staff in Baghdad were not addressed. Qazi said the UN was concerned about security in the Al-Rasheed Hotel when MNF-I turns over control to the Iraqi Government in early May. SRSG Qazi raised similar concerns on January 23 with MNF-I General Casey. MNF-I agreed to minor changes that would address Qazi's main concerns. On February 1, UN staff met with PolOff and advised that, with adjustments to the planned security posture at the Al-Rasheed, Qazi on January 29 had accepted UN continued presence at the Al-Rasheed hotel for the next six to eight months. END SUMMARY.

UN Unhappy with Planned Al-Rasheed Security Changes

[1](#)2. (C) SRSG Qazi told Ambassador on January 26 that he was concerned about recent changes in security around the Al-Rasheed Hotel, where most of the UN staff in Iraq are housed. Qazi said his staff members were getting nervous as they saw the concrete "T" walls coming down and more Iraqi traffic in the area. He said the new UN facility at the old U.S. Embassy would take 18 months to prepare, and an alternate site would be needed in the interim. Qazi said the proposal to have UN staff occupy dedicated floors at the Al-Rasheed when MNF-I transfers control to the Iraqi government in May, and U.S.-contracted security is withdrawn, would be unacceptable. He said the UN would stay at the Al-Rasheed only if given control over the entire property. A different dedicated site would also be a possibility despite JASG reports that no site would be available before October [1](#)2006.

[1](#)3. (C) SRSG Qazi outlined these same concerns on January 23 in a meeting with MNF-I General Casey and General Lynch. Following this meeting, and in consultation with UNAMI staff, MNF-I agreed to minor changes that would address Qazi's main concerns. PolOff met with senior military advisor to UNAMI Col. Tucker on February 1, who reported that the JASG/RSO will leave the U.S.-contracted security inside the Al-Rasheed after May 1 to meet the UN's requirements. JASG will pay for the security for the remainder of the contract (through October 2006), and the UN will reimburse all costs. After October 2006, JASG does not intend to renew the contract, and the UN will have to make its own arrangements. JASG agreed to assist UNAMI in identifying alternative locations for the 120 UN residents currently at the Al-Rasheed.

14. (C) As reported in ref A, Qazi confirmed that U/SYG Veness would travel to Baghdad in early February to assess the UN security situation. A report and recommendations to SYG Annan will be made on February 28. With the housing problem apparently resolved, the UN presence in Iraq should not be threatened. Ambassador told Qazi that the USG wants the UN to stay in Baghdad and be helpful.
KHALILZAD